



Tina Steele

medical world correspondent

We have added a page to our artists pages to honor Tina's mother, [Jill Adams](#). You will find samples of her art on t-shirts, cards and other products available there. The proceeds from these sales will not only help with her last expenses but will aid in one of her favorite causes, animal rescue.

The Weight Loss Diet Myth

In case you were not aware of this little fact...weight loss diets don't work! Let me rephrase that, if you go on a diet to lose weight, and you, *at any point in time*, go off that diet, you WILL put the weight back on. Two thirds of us will put it all back on within a year. Within five years, 97% of us will have regained every pound we lost. Some of us will put on even more than we took off, which is so not fair! I know of what I speak, having tried every diet known to mankind, and now weigh more than ever. The only time in my life that I have been really thin was when I was desperately ill. I don't want to go there again, thank you.

Diets are a \$46 billion a year industry in the United States. That's an awful lot of money to be spending on something that, in the long term, does not work. It is the mother lode for the food industry. They manufacture the fat-laden processed foods that pack on the pounds, and then they provide the dietary products to help us take them off. If you pardon the pun, it could be said that they are double-dipping.

The pharmaceutical/chemical industries are no better - they come up with many of the ingredients that the food manufacturers use; such as artificial sweeteners, the high fructose corn syrups, and trans fats, not to mention the chemicals used in processing, preserving and enhancing foodstuffs, all of which contribute (again, pardon the pun) heavily to obesity, not to mention a plethora of associated health problems. They then deliver the medications to help us lose weight, control the heart disease and diabetes, and other health issues they brought about in the first place by making us put on weight. Very clever. Very lucrative.

So how in the heck do we lose weight, you ask? Good question. I ask myself the same thing all the time, as I head off to the gym for another grueling hour and a half workout, which has resulted in fabulous blood pressure, nice n' low cholesterol, and the pulse of a 20 year old athlete, but nary a pound lost. I have the metabolism of a lazy snail; if it were any slower I would be dead!

As we age, things do slow down, including thyroid function, although it is not

exclusive to older adults. It is thus well worth getting a Thyroid Function Test (TSH) performed annually, just to make sure that it is not an issue. It is a simple blood test, and can be done at the same time as you have all your other annual blood work done for such things as cholesterol and triglycerides, and blood count. Hypothyroidism (low thyroid function) is more prevalent than many people realize, and its impact on weight gain is well recognized (see the link below).

Adrenal fatigue is a result of today's fast-paced world; particularly when we have lived and worked highly stressful lives, and this can ultimately affect weight. It is not a condition that is widely accepted in mainstream medicine, but many alternative health practitioners are familiar with it, its causes and treatment. I have provided a couple of links that provide a list of symptoms.

Exercise is pivotal to losing weight, it is also pivotal to our overall health and wellbeing. However, you must first check with your doctor to make sure that you are physically fit enough to start a regimen. Exercise helps to boost the way our body processes what we put into it (that's what metabolism is). It also helps to boost our happy hormones, and make us feel less depressed. It helps to reduce aggression and anxiety. It helps us manage stress better. But, I must warn you, if you have not worked out in a while, and you are more flab than fab, once you start to build muscle you will weigh more, at least for a while, before your metabolism speeds up and you begin to burn calories faster than your body can store them. It can be depressing to get on the scale and find that, despite all the sweat equity you have put into the trips to the gym, the weight goes up, not down. We are assured that it will, eventually, produce the required results. Be patient.

Yeah, and try tellingly that to a Type A personality. I want to lose weight yesterday, not a couple of months from now!! OK, oohhkaaayyy, so I'm hanging in there. But, what else can we do to get rid of those extra pounds that refuse to go anywhere? if you are in your twenties, you just need to think about working out and the pounds drop off you. I hate you. For us ladies 'of a certain age' it often seems as if nothing will ever work, apart from crash diets, total deprivation, or plastic surgery. And we already know that the diets don't work (I just told you), and not all of us can either afford or want to 'go under the knife' - we like the idea of looking like a runway model, we just can't figure out (another pun, sorry) how to get anywhere close to the ideal.

Actually, the world would be a really boring place if we all looked magazine front-page thin. Many models live on cigarettes and coffee, and precious little else; thus their health is precarious at best, and their professional shelf life is very limited, except for the few at the top. There is really only one thing that can help manage the pounds, and may even take some off, and that is eating properly.

My regular readers already know how much importance I put on a healthy diet. It is vitally important to consume a balance of fresh, preferably organic, fruits and vegetables, hormone free, anti-biotic free milk, eggs and meat, unsaturated fats, and lots and lots of fiber from whole grains. No white flour, white sugar or white grains, and no hydrogenated fats. For anyone who is still eating a preponderance of

processed foods, you will automatically lose weight just by switching over to eating these better-for-you foods. But what if we already eat healthily and still can't lose weight. I know that I don't overeat, and everything I put in my mouth is healthy, so what gives?

The way we eat may be the key.

Paul McKenna, Ph.D., from the UK, came up with what appears to be a highly successful program to get people to eat mindfully, and in turn lose weight. It is not a diet, it is a way to eat based squarely on behavioral psychology. It essentially tells us that we can eat what we like, when we like, just as long as we follow some simple rules. Dr. McKenna has appeared on TV over here, and has many best-selling books to his name. He might seem, at first sight, to be a bit over the top, but I really think that he has come up with something positive that has the potential to produce the required results. You might want to check it out. For sure, you will not lose a bunch of weight in a short period of time, but you may drop pounds, and keep most of them off, without depriving yourself of all the things you love.

Briefly, his first rule is to only eat when we are hungry, and there is a scale on his website to help decide if we NEED to eat. The second rule is to eat what we like, not what we think we should have. When we are deprived of something we like or want, it is guaranteed that we are going to want it more! Rule number three states that we should eat 'consciously' - that is to be aware of each mouthful, actually taste the food, chew slowly and thoughtfully and put knives and forks down between mouthfuls. When we are fast eaters, as I am, it takes some getting used to, but I'm trying. And lastly, when we think that we have eaten enough, and are full, we must stop eating. It's pretty simple, so I encourage you join me and to try this for yourselves.

Another behavioral approach to eating I encountered, when doing my training to become a certified wellness coach, is very interesting and also uses the principles of mindful eating. It is called 'Intuitive Eating' and is proving to be probably the best alternative to dieting I have ever seen. Essentially, it tells us that we should eat only when we are hungry, and only to eat until we are full. It examines why we eat the wrong foods, or too much, and helps us change the way we approach eating. Before reaching for the bag of chips, it tells us to ask ourselves, Am I Hungry?, which is also the name of the program. There are costs involved, but with four different ways to do the course, it is possible to find one that works for the pocketbook. When you see a lot of doctors who are licensed Am I Hungry? practitioners, you can be assured that it has been thoroughly researched, tried and tested. The website is linked below.

There are a few tricks you can employ to reduce your appetite, and they will help you eat less, or less fattening foods. The folks at Real Age have come up with some useful tactics, check them out via the link. Such things as eating protein for breakfast; for example 2 scrambled eggs and toast versus a bagel and cream cheese, will help reduce the number of calories consumed later in the day.

Something that I do is drink a glass of water about 20 minutes before I eat. It helps to fill me up and I consequently eat less. However, it is not a good idea to drink right

before eating, or drink too much during the meal, even right afterwards, because it interferes with digestion by diluting the enzymes that help food digest, leading to gas, bloating and indigestion. Of course, as any European will tell you, a glass of wine helps the digestive process, so who am I to argue?

You may have a diet trick or two of your own that has worked for you, so if you would like to share it with other readers please send it to me in an email, and I will include your tip in an upcoming column. In the meantime, take heart, there *are* ways to wrestle our weight back down to manageable levels, but like everything worthwhile in life, it takes work and dedication. Don't forget to incorporate healthy eating and exercise into your life, and you will already be half way there...the rest is not easy, but nor is it impossible. I'm working at it, so why don't you join me?

Until next month, here are a few links to help you on the path to a healthier weight, without dieting:

[Some Popular Diets and Their Costs](#)

[Hypothyroidism Explained by the Mayo Clinic](#)

Adrenal Fatigue - a few facts:

<http://www.adrenalfatigue.org/whatis.php>

<http://thyroid.about.com/cs/endocrinology/a/adrenalfatigue.htm>

[Exercise and Happy Hormones](#)

[Paul McKenna's Site](#)

[Am I Hungry site](#)

[Outwitting Your Appetite Tips from Real Age](#)

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